

Research Defence Society.

HUMANITY AND SCIENCE

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND

THE BISHOP OF ELY, D.D.*

MY LORD, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I could indeed have wished that with Lord Cromer's words this meeting should have speedily come to an end. I think you will sympathise with me, for I cannot speak with the authority either of a scientific expert or of one who has made a special study of this great controversy. I can only,—and perhaps that is the reason why I should stand here,—I can only represent those who desire, with a full sense of responsibility, to consider these matters and to form an opinion upon them. I have tried, as best I can, independently to think the matter out; and I will ask your indulgence, while, in a very few words, I lay before you the way in which I have come to regard it.

I think that we must take our stand upon one of those great facts that seem to run up into the ultimate mysteries of the world as we know it; the fact that man, strangely akin as he is to the lower animals, has had given to him

*Speech at a Meeting of the Cambridge Branch of the RESEARCH DEFENCE SOCIETY, March 4, 1910. The Chair was taken by Sir GEORGE DARWIN, F.R.S., President of the Branch. Other Speakers were the Right Hon. the EARL OF CROMER, President of the Society, and the Hon. SYDNEY HOLLAND, Chairman of Committee.

a dominion over them; that he is allowed to use them for his service. But this dominion of man over the lower animals carries with it a corollary of responsibility. Conscience at once assures us that there are limits, laid down by moral considerations, to the exercise of the power which man possesses over the lower animals. If we must needs inflict suffering upon them, there must be an adequate motive for that action, which justifies itself to the educated conscience of mankind; and that suffering must be minimised.

The fact of man's dominion over the lower animals stands out, as it seems to me, clear and distinct, as a part of the constitution of the world as we know it, and, I will dare to add, as part of what we know of the Divine Will. Every day we live our life in the exercise of this dominion over the lower animals. We slaughter animals for the support of human life. The responsibility which is attached to that exercise of our dominion operates in the regulation and inspection of slaughter houses; and I sometimes think that we ordinary people are not sufficiently alive to the responsibility which society has in this matter. But be that as it may, I think I am speaking well within the rightful limits when I assert that the suffering caused in the provision of food, we will say for London, in one single day exceeds, infinitely and unspeakably exceeds, the suffering caused in the research work of our laboratories during a whole year.

Again, we inflict suffering and death on the lower animals in order that we may avoid the infliction of suffering and death on human beings. Take a very obvious and quite possible illustration. I possess a motor car. If the driver of my motor car were going along a road, and were in such a position that he had to run down either a little child,—we will say a tramp, if you will,—or a dog; at that moment, without hesitation, he would decide to run down the dog, causing it suffering, causing it death. That choice the universal conscience of mankind would approve, nay, it would at the expense of legal penalties demand it. Just apply that very simple illustration to the matter under consideration now. Multiply the dog by ten, but multiply the child by thousands. Research has proved itself the means whereby suffering is immeasurably lessened for the

whole race of man and for the whole race of the lower animals : and research, if it is to be at all fruitful in results, must be not only observational but also experimental. Research is precluded, just as the chauffeur would be precluded, from trying experiments on living men ; therefore it claims, as its right and as its duty, to experiment on lower animals.

That right, that duty, on behalf of the whole animal creation, seems to me to be in direct and absolute accordance with the constitution of the world as we know it : that is, with what we are able to read of the Divine Will. But just at this point it is that emotion comes in, the emotion of pity. It is possible to fix the attention on the suffering of the particular animal or group of animals, and to desire to decide the whole controversy on the simple ground of that appeal to emotion. Now from all I have read,—and I have tried to look into this matter,—I believe the suffering of animals in our laboratories is vastly exaggerated. The very term vivisection, which, of course, in a sense might be applied to ordinary surgery, has, more or less consciously, been chosen *ad invidiam*. A very large number of these experiments, so far as I understand, involve a minimum of suffering to animals, and a large number are the experiments of the physician rather than the surgeon. Surely we can only rightly view the suffering of the animal under experiment when we compare that suffering with the whole sum of the suffering which by that experiment might be avoided, the suffering of numberless human beings, whose sufferings involve the sufferings of those who are near and dear to them, and also impoverish that store of energy and power which is at the command of the whole community. So I venture to deal with the appeal to emotion.

But it seems to me that at this point the sense of responsibility of which I spoke comes in. For those experiments of which we are speaking the motive must be adequate. So far as I can see, there is no justification for experiments which simply aim at re-demonstrating, again and again, facts and laws which have already been completely proved. There must be,—and this is exactly what I understand is claimed,—there must be a motive of serious research on the part of experts who can use the knowledge they have gained by their experiments. Again,

I venture to say, such experiments must be properly regulated by responsible and expert authority, and carried out on the condition that the suffering caused should be minimised. In my heart I believe that this is done ; for I have known, when I was a resident in this University, those who are engaged in these pursuits. I am quite certain that they are not the men who would inflict needless, causeless suffering. They give their time and their ability to the lessening of the whole sum of the suffering which is in the world. They are to be trusted.

For these reasons which I have tried briefly to sketch, I can but come to one conclusion. I believe that in the cause of true research, the aim of which is the diminution of suffering and pain, especially of human beings, experiments on living lower animals under well considered and careful conditions are justified, nay, are a serious duty ; and, speaking with full responsibility, I say that I and those who think with me are bound to give what support we can, deliberate and open support, to this Society, in whose cause we are met this evening.